

REMARKS

In the non-final Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4, 25, and 26 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Duault et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,108,336) in view of Kitazawa et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,845,107); rejected claims 2, 7, 13, 14, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Duault et al. in view of Kitazawa et al. and Grossglauser et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,604,731); and rejected claims 8 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Duault et al. in view of Kitazawa et al., Grossglauser et al., and Applicant's allegedly admitted prior art. The Examiner objected to claims 5, 6, 9-12, 16-19, and 21-24 as dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By this Amendment, Applicant cancels claims 9, 16, and 21 without prejudice or disclaimer, and amends claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10-14, 17-20, 22, 23, 25, and 26 to improve form. Claims 1-26 are pending.

Strictly to expedite prosecution, Applicant has amended independent claims 1, 13, 20, 25, and 26 to include allowable subject matter of claims 9, 16, and 21. Therefore, claims 1, 13, 20, 25, and 26 should be in condition for immediate allowance by the Examiner. Claims 2-4, 7, and 8 depend from claim 1, and claims 14 and 15 depend from claim 13. Each of claims 2-4, 7, 8, 14, and 15 should also be in condition for immediate allowance by the Examiner at least by virtue of its dependency from claim 1 or 13.

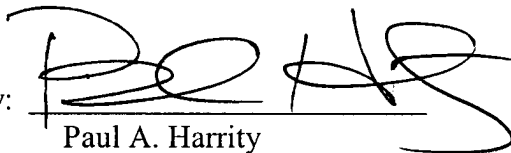
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests the reconsideration of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

If the Examiner does not believe that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is urged to contact the undersigned to expedite prosecution of this application.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1070 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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